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By the Author

W. B. D.



KINCARDINESHIRE

T R A D I T I O N S.



By JOSEPH GRANT.

It is the voice of years that are gone.

OSSIAN.

ABERDEEN :

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TO

MAJOR LEITH HAY.

YOUNGER OF RANNES,

THE FOLLOWING BALLADS ARE INSCRIBED.

AS A POOR TRIBUTE OF RESPECT.

BY HIS OBEDIENT SERVANT.

THE AUTHOR.



KINCARDINESHIRE TRADITIONS.

THE LAST OF THE PICTS.

For me remains no kingdom but revenge—
No music but thy tortures and thy groans.

Young's Zanga.

I.

THE purple mists of evening hung
Around the summit of Cairn-shee,
Where stood the tower of Aichus stern—
The last of all his race was he.

II.

Twenty moons had seen that tower
Closely begirt with spear and brand—
Vain were all the arts of war—
Vain the strength of human hand.

III.

'Twas said that winged harpies brought
The food of Aichus through the air ;
Yet the northern heroes still
Urged the siege with warlike care.

IV.

Skill'd was Aichus in mysteries dark—
The sprites of night in thrall he held ;
And the demons of the haunted wild
At the sound of his foot-fall crouch'd and yell'd.

V.

No earthly artist form'd his shield—
A magic claymore graced his thigh ;
And when 'twas drawn in the darkness of night,
It gleamed like a meteor of the sky.

VI.

It was the gift of his wizard sire ;
Aichus well such gift became—
For the blood of Scotia's choicest sons
Had often quench'd its deadly flame.

VII.

In fifty battles he had fought ;
And in fighting wiles well skill'd was he ;
But his gallant tribe had melted away—
He was lone in his tower of Cairn-shee.

VIII.

He saw his ancient vassals bend
Submissive to their conquerors brave ;
“ But there yet is one,” said the prideful Lord,
“ Whom Scottish might shall never enslave.”

IX.

The purple mists of evening hung
Around the summit of Cairn-shee,
When at the gate of Aichus stern
Stood a youth of high degree.

X.

Low he bowed to the dreaded man—
“Aichus, the mystic night is come,
When thou swarest to teach the chiefs of the north
The arts that are known to thee alone.”

XI.

“The northern chiefs are welcome all,”
Answered the wizard grim and hoar ;
And the smile of a moment brightened his brow,
Where smile was never seen before.

XII.

Fifteen gallant chieftains sit
Side by side in Aichus' hall—
In the light of fifteen silver lamps
Glimmer their lances stout and tall.

XIII.

“Aichus ! the moon has left the sky,
Wrapt is the earth in midnight's gloom—
Thou knowest why we here are met,
Proceed, or dread our angry doom.”

XIV.

Redder grew Aichus' burning eye—

“Revenge,” he cried, “revenge is mine !
Sons of rapine ! soon you'll know
More than mortal could e'er divine.

XV.

“A devouring power is beneath us now—
Soon 'twill reach this fated hall—
But one short hour and its ruins vast
Will cover the ashes of us all.”

XVI.

Dark, dark, grew each chieftain's brow—
Rage on each cheek was mantling then—
While Aichus laugh'd as a fiend may laugh
When he views the ruin of sinful men

XVII.

A sultry and oppressive glow,
Like the breath of a furnace, fill'd the hall—
And the fire drew near with its crackling sound,
Which stoutest hearts can well appal.

XVIII.

Each chieftain's claymore glanced on high—
The blade of Aichus too was bare—
And fifteen swords it kept in play,
Till the blaze rose around with angry glare.

XIX.

A shriek, and a crash like thunder, rung,
Far through the silence of the night ,
High in air burst the bellowing flame,
And wide around shone its fearful light.

XX.

Never more will the chiefs of the north
Lead their bands o'er hill or lee—
They sleep, they sleep, without their fame,
On the misty summit of Cairn-shee.

ELLA'S FUNERAL.

I.

“ O ! listen, lady fair, to him
Who lov'd you well and long !
Nor laugh at former vows, nor scorn
The warnings of my tongue.

II.

“ Your bridegroom's lands are broad and wide—
And he may plight to thee
His lasting faith, but, O ! he has
No heart to love like me !

III.

“ His early days in vice were spent,
In riot and in sin ;
And of that passion pure, no trace
Remains his breast within.

IV.

“ Soon will you know his love is like
The frail Aurora's ray,
That sparkles for a little while,
And fadeth quite away.

V.

“ Then think, O think, ere 'tis too late !
 To Henry turn again ;
 Wealth cannot buy an antidote
 To sorrow, care, and pain.”

VI.

He turn'd, and from his cheek so pale
 He wiped the burning tear ;
 But Ella smiled, in faithless scorn,
 On Henry once so dear.

VII.

“ Ye minstrels strike a merry string,”
 Lord Gerald gaily cried ;
 And cheerily o'er moor and hill
 The jovial party hied.

VIII.

And soon on Ella's finger white
 Did wedlock's symbol glow—
 Alas ! to her it only prov'd
 The pledge of grief and woe.

IX.

For Gerald cold and colder grew,
 And love to hate gave place—
 And paramours he cherished
 Before his lady's face.

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X.

“ O ! mark'd ye not my lady's neck ?
'Tis blue and swollen, I ween—
In health last night she went to bed,
Never to rise again.”

XI.

“ Hush, Anna ! hush—you talk of what
Was well observ'd by me—
But let your doubts die in your breast,
If scaithless ye would be.”

XII.

There's deepest dole in Gerald's hall—
And many a bitter tear
Is shed for her, who still had been
To all below her dear.

XIII.

But by her coffin stood a form
Whom no one seem'd to know—
And in his deep dark eye there dwelt
A calm and settled woe.

XIV.

Health's glowing roses from his cheek
Had withered in their prime—
He seem'd the ghost of comeliness
That perish'd ere its time.

XV.

In solemn sadness, when the bier
Was borne along the glen,
That silent stranger still was seen
Amid the doleful train.

XVI.

Slow toll'd the bell, and in the dust
Was Ella's body laid ;
Then, beckoning Gerald from the throng,
Away the stranger sped.

XVII.

And Gerald followed, wondering still,
Across the silent plain ;
Still his companion hurried on
Towards a lonely glen.

XVIII.

Then turn'd to Gerald, and his eye
In anger wildly gleam'd—
He spoke, and, oh ! his hollow voice
Like midnight thunder seem'd.

XIX.

“Thou seest before thee one whose hate
With deadliest rancour burns,
And will consume the hardened wretch
Whose crimes the world mourns.

XX.

“ My arm now lacks its former strength
To wield the heavy sword,
But I will wreak poor Ella's wrongs
On thee her cruel lord.”

XXI.

Then plaid and scabbard on the earth,
In trembling wrath, he dash'd,
And rush'd on Gerald, while on high
His thirsty weapon flash'd.

XXII.

And steel met steel with fiery blows,
Re-echoing far and wide—
Nor faster falls the lightning's dart,
Than they their broadswords plied.

XXIII.

Long, long, and fierce the combat raged,
And every nerve they strain,
Until a sudden wheeling blow
Cut Gerald to the brain.

XXIV.

Convuls'd he fell—no friendly ear
Heard Gerald's dying groan ;
And o'er his dust may no one weep—
It lies in grave unknown.

THE SOUTHERON WOOERS.

I.

A gallant squire, and twa gude knights,
In the merry month o' May,
Cam' ridin' o'er the southlan' heights,
To court our Helen sae gay :
An' ane o' the knights had gowd and lan',
An' the ither had castles three—
But the lady cauldly cried—" Begone !
For I ne'er will gang wi' thee."

II.

The squire he proffered a heart fu' leal—
An' true love shone in his eye ;
An' he was the laird o' wood an' fiel'
At the foot o' the Grampians high :
An' he was a tall an' a tight young man
As maid cou'd wish to see—
But the lady cauldly cried—" Begone !
For I ne'er will gang wi' thee."

III.

" My daughter's scarcely yet sixteen,
But tho' she's passin' fair,
An' roun', an' tall, and o' wit right keen,
For man she downa care :

Let twa mair twalmonths o'er her pass,
An' then, but doubt you'll see,
Whan that time comes, the yielding lass
Mair easily woo'd will be."

IV.

Wi' glee an' din the castle rang,
The wine-cups high were fill'd—
An' the minstrel's lilt, an' the auld bard's sang,
Through the oaken rafters thrill'd :
" Our mirth droops not," the auld lady said,
But whare can Helen be ?"
She's snug i' the fauld o' Gordon's plaid,
Below the hawthorn tree.

V.

Ye may brak' the steed o' fiercest mood,
An' guide him as ye will—
An' bend to ony form ye wou'd
The young oak on the hill :
But youthfu' love is a thrawart bird,
An' his ain gate still will flee ;
Ye may let him alane, for he's hard to be ta'en,
An' tamed he'll never be.

ANNA OF GLEN-IVOCH.

I.

“ Go saddle in haste my coal-black steed,
And bring my battle spear,
And bid my bravest men with speed
Get on their fighting gear.

II.

“ My wilful child, last night, has fled
With Eric, well I know—
But never shall my daughter wed
Glen-Ivoch’s feudal foe.

III.

“ The cup of peace I’d gladly pass
To Eric of Strathspey,
But, ah ! his bloody grandsire was
My grandsire’s enemy !”

IV.

Twenty-five well armed men
Swift through the portal wind,
And their foaming steeds adown the glen
Bound like the mountain hind.

V.

And away they go through down and dell,
O'er high crags' cloudy brow ;
The dark wood and the streamy vale,
Untired they thunder through.

VI.

The evening mists come creeping down
Like wreaths of living snow ;
The groves are clothed in shining brown,
Tip'd with the sun's last glow.

VII.

And soft and slow the shades of night
O'er hill and valley falls ;
And stars, in robes of golden light,
Peep from their airy halls.

VIII.

Glen-Ivoch's heiress, spent with toil,
A grassy couch has press'd—
Her woes forgotten for a while,
In sleep's soft arms embraced.

IX.

Wan is her cheek—the dew of night
Are sparkling 'mid her hair ;
And near her sits a fair young knight,
With brow of thoughtful care.

X.

But, hark ! what sounds are those that break
Upon his listening ear ?
“ Anna, my love, awake ! awake !
Our enemies’ steps I hear.

XI.

“ Of my brave clan, O had I here
Only the weakest ten,
I’d drive all those, in trembling fear,
Back to their rocks again.”

XII.

A shout rang on the midnight air—
On rush’d the ruffians all ;
And Anna shriek’d, and tore her hair,
And saw her lover fall.

* * * *

XIII.

The morning beams on stream and lake
Are glimmering dazingly ;
To shepherd’s pipe the echo’s wake,
And scented breezes sigh.

XIV.

But cold and pale is Eric’s cheek—
His locks are stiff with gore ;
And light nor sound will never break
The chieftain’s slumbers more.

* * * *

XV.

“ Now, daughter, you would fain hold me,
And my commands, in scorn ;
But Mhorglen’s chief your lord shall be,
Ere dawns another morn.”

XVI.

“ O say not so, my father dear,
O say not so to me,
For death’s dark cavern, cold and drear,
My bridal bed will be.

XVII.

“ I dream’d that in a darksome wild
I stray’d all sad and lone,
And through a thorny pathway toil’d,
By meteor blazes shown.

XVIII.

“ Still gloomier grew the desert heath,
But sudden light shone round,
And one whose eyes are closed in death
Stood by in glory crown’d.

XIX.

“ His robe was like the cloud that swims
Around the summer moon—
His smile was like the morning beams
Amid the dews of June.

XX.

“ He gave his spotless hand to me,
And, quick as thought can fly,
The world that heaven-rapt sages see
Burst on my ravish’d eye.

XXI.

“ There, on the banks of rivers bright,
Sprung flowers of every dye,
And there liv’d no blast their bloom to blight
Beneath that radiant sky.

XXII.

“ There joy, secure from sorrow’s gloom,
A thousand garlands wreath’d,
Mid groves whose never-fading bloom
Perpetual fragrance breath’d.

XXIII.

“ And heavenly strains, at cherub’s touch,
From golden harps did flow,
And soothed the soul to raptures, such
As mortals cannot know.

XXIV.

“ And worldly ills, and worldly strife,
Seem’d all a painful dream ;
But, though I wak’d to joyless life,
I soon shall rest again.”

XXV.

As slumber steals on wearied wight
Death stole on Anna fair—
As fades the gloaming's mellow light
She left this world of care.

SONG OF THE FAIRY KING.

FROM AN UNPUBLISHED TALE.

I am the chief of the Elfin band—
And none more bold than me
Has ever led their ranks so grand
Through the shades of the moonlit lee.

My cloak is the leaf of the birk tree high,
My vesture the green fly's wing,
My shield is the hide of the grasshopper's thigh,
And my lance the brown ant's sting.

We hunt the gnat through the leafy dell,
And over the broomy hill,
And steer our barks of the acorn shell
Through the waves of the silvery rill.

And O when the storm-beat steeple quakes,
When the deer in covert quail,
And the sprite of the blast from his dark wing
shakes
Around the rattling hail,

Gleefully then we dart abroad
On the whirlwind's viewless wing,
And in the halls of the dark dark cloud
Our songs of battle sing.

And when morning's ruddy banner glows
Wide over the eastern sky,
In the fragrant folds of the snow-white rose
We hide from human eye.

SALLY OF DEE.

Sally sits in her woodbine bower,
And her hair is braided rarely—
For it is the night, and nigh is the hour,
When she promised to meet her Charlie.

“ He will not cross the river to-night,
For its waves are high and foaming”—
Yet still she gaz'd through the fading light
Of a cold and murky gloaming.

On to the Dee the little rills
Stole with a mournful moaning—
And in the woods, and on the hills,
A doleful sound was groaning.

“ May no dark fate, my Charlie dear,
Thy hours of life be numbering—
For I heard thy voice, 'mid dreams of fear,
Last night on my pillow slumbering.”

“ And I heard the water spirit scream,
Till the forests seem'd to shiver—
And I saw a death-light's wandering gleam,
On the breast of the winding river.”

Through the dark sky flash'd a meteor's ray,
And her lover's form stood before her—
She spoke, but the vision melted away,
And the damp of dread came o'er her.

All night she trode Dee's windings wild—
Morn brought no joy to Sally,
For she saw the youth who on her smil'd
Borne lifeless through the valley.

Blue was his cheek, and the water cold
From his dark brown hair was streaming—
And glaz'd and dim was that eye so bold,
Of late with true love gleaming.

THE BRIDAL OF TILLYREULL.

O Mary was the laird's daughter,
An' a sweet little maiden was she ;
Ye might travel frae Skye to the Lothians
green,
Ere a lady sae fair ye'd see.

Her raven hair curl'd round a brow
White as the midnight snaw ;
An' her cheek was fairer than ony pink
That spring breeze e'er did blaw.

Sae slim an' slender was her waist,
Ye it might eithly span ;
An' her bonny wee han' was saft an' fair
As the breast o' the spotless swan.

An' mony a squire, an' worthy knight,
An' lord o' high degree,
For Mary sigh'd, but she smil'd on nane.
Save Ronald o' Eillanlee.

“ O shame on thee, my ae daughter !
O dool and shame on thee !
Ye meet a lan'less loon at night,
When lords are in love wi' thee.

“ But gin I had that lan’less loon,
Wha acts sae bauld a part,
I swear by the light, that my broadsword’s point
Shou’d find his craven heart.”

“ An’ wha are they, my father dear,
Wha durst sic stories say ?”
“ Ye may ask the girl that braids your hair,
Then dare to say me nay.”

“ O, Sarah, little did I think
That ye would me beguile ;
Although the guise o’ innocence
Aft hideth fraud and wile.

“ But hie thee hence, an’ lat the tear
O’ penitence fill thine ee ;
For I never gave thee cause to pour
Sic bitter woes on me.”

Then by the grey-hair’d wizard came,
Wha dwalt in lanely how ;
An’ he cry’d—“ Lady fair, o’ the girl beware
Whom ye’ve turn’d awa’ just now.

“ She’ll shun yer sight for mony a day—
But in this ha’ again,
Ye baith s’all meet, an’ baith s’all greet
O’er a fair youth cruelly slain.

“ A dark cloud hangs upon your fate,
Whilk I wad scan in vain ;
But he whom you love will constant prove,
An’ honour an’ wealth he’ll gain.”

But surly, surly, was the laird,
Nor peace nor rest gat he,
For devisin’ plans o’ mischief an’ wrang
’Gainst Ronald o’ Eillanlee.

A ship o’ war lay on the coast—
An’ he let the captain know,
That he s’ud hae a hunder merks
To press young Ronald awa’.

The vera neist mornin’, Mary saw
A band o’ armed men
Her hapless Ronald drag awa’,
Wi’ oaths, across the plain.

O fast, fast, fell her burnin’ tears,
An’ O but her heart was sair—
“ May Heaven thee shield, my lover dear,
For I’ll never see you mair.”

“ Now gang your wa’,” the auld laird said,
“ An’ may the first shot be
Ordain’d to meet your pridefu’ head,
An’ redd the warl’ o’ thee.”

* * * *

Five lang, lang years had roll'd awa',
 Sin' Ronald cross'd the main ;
 An' sair did Mary weep and mourn
 For him whom she heard was slain.

“ Now dry yer tears, my ae daughter,
 An' hush yer foolish moan—
 An' smile as ye were wont to smile,
 Tho' Ronald be dead an' gone.

“ An' braid ance mair yer shinin' hair,
 An' calm yer heart o' pride ;
 For I hae sworn, an' ye s'all be
 The gay Sir William's bride.”

In sorrow mute, an' in rendin' grief
 The maiden turn'd away ;
 She heard the words o' her cruel sire,
 But wist na what to say.

* * * *

Roun' Tillyreull's castle wa's
 Was heard the pipe an' horn ,
 An' a' within was hurry an' din,
 For it was the bridal morn.

An' soon Sir William was announced—
 A comely young man was he ;
 Health glow'd in his cheek, an' rapture danced
 In his dark an' rollin' ee.

But bonny Mary's cheek was wan
As the leaf o' the lily flower—
An' tremblin' she stood her maidens between,
While her een wi' tears ran o'er.

“ Now do thine office, holy man,
An' let our joys abound ;”
The priest wou'd have spoke, but a thundering
Gart a' the ha' resound : [knock

An' a youth o' martial mein burst in—
Wi' gowd his garments shone—
A bright star glittered on his breast,
Wi' mony a precious stone.

But brighter blaz'd his twa black een
Than the diamonds on his vest—
An' his dauntin' aspect plainly tauld
The anger in his breast.

In silence stood the wonderin' crowd,
Nor deem'd wha this might be ;
But brawly did bonny Mary ken
'Twas Ronald o' Eillanlee.

“ I claim,” he cry'd, “ that doleful bride !
Her earliest vows were mine ;
An' whae'er dares touch her 'gainst her will,
His dearest blood shall tine.”

“ Now by the rood,” the auld laird said,
“ ’Tis Ronald o’ Eillanlee !”
Sir William drew his sword, an’ cried,
“ Depart ye instantlie !”

“ Put up thy light blade, silly lord—
To slay thee were a shame ;
But I hae followers wha will drive
Your serfs a’ quakin’ hame.”

He turn’d him roun’ upon his heel,
An’ his siller whistle blew—
An’ half an hunder well arm’d men
Rush’d fiercely into view.

An’ swords on either side were drawn,
An’ blude began to fa’
In reekin’ streams, an’ the clang o’ steel
Rang roun’ the castle wa’.

“ Hold !” cried the laird, “ let slaughter cease ;
To Ronald I well gie
My daughter—tak’ her gallant youth,
For ye’ve won her worthilie.”

“ Gie me thy han’ then, Mary dear,
O’er lan’ an’ stormy sea
I’ve been a wanderer mony a year,
But I’ve still been true to thee.”

But just as Mary forward step'd
Her welcome kind to pay,
A dagger through her lover's back
Found to his heart its way.

Breathless he sunk, an' by his side
The assassin likewise fell,
For quick as he had gi'en the wound,
As quick he'd stab'd himsel'.

“ My Ronald's slain ! O traitorous youth,
This deed what gart thee do ! ”
Faintly spak' the young marine,
“ The deed I dinna rue :

“ But death is near—look in my face,
An' haply ye may ken
The girl wha was yer servan', lang
Ere Ronald cross'd the main.

“ My love for him was deep as thine,
Though that he never knew ;
I followed him through flood and field,
An' now——Adieu ! adieu ! ”

THE WIZARD'S LAST HOUR.

O there are crimes
For which no penitence can e'er atone.

Old Play.

I.

“ Preacher ! preacher ! cease thy prayer,
And thy texts and useless comforts spare,
For they add but brimstone to the fire
That burns in my breast with quenchless ire :
My life is wasting fast away,
Like a speck of snow in the winds of May ;
But though years on years could o’er me roll,
Hope never could dawn on my darkened soul ! ”

II.

“ You think I rave, but it is not so,
For my future doom full well I know—
When on Eternity’s shore I stand,
The evil one will his prey demand ;
For I was the last of the hell-taught crew
Whom he hunted the awful cavern through ;
And many a one has mark’d, I ween,
That my shadow fell not on the moonlit green.

III.

“ Upon the leaf of the holy book,
For a single moment I may not look—
The sacred bread, and the hallowed wine,
To taste or touch must ne’er be mine :
Much I could tell that would shock your ear,
And freeze your horror-struck heart to hear—
But O ! it boots not now that I
Should confess the sins on my breast that lie.”

IV.

Again the preacher knelt in prayer,
But a sudden hurricane swept the air—
It seem’d as if all the winds of heaven
With one wild effort their bonds had riven ;
Lamp and torch to earth were hurl’d,
Faggot and brand aloft were whirl’d—
And tower and castle, high and strong,
Shook in the blast as it rav’d along.

V.

Slowly the dread sound died away,
And again broke forth the wan moon’s ray—
Horror’s deep thrill o’er the mute throng pass’d,
For the wizard lay lifeless, and pale, and ghast ;
Every feature had writhed in pain,
Like one by poisoned javelin slain—
In awful ruin before them lay
The unrepentant sinner’s clay.

THE FAIRY'S FIELD.

'Mid the hills of wild Lumphanen
Lies the field of which I sing ;
I've seen the spot—nor do I wonder
Fairies there should form their ring.

'Tis not, like a lowland meadow,
Prison'd in by fence or hedge ;
Never on this spot romantic
Has been spent improvement's rage.

No—around its heathy boundaries
Blooms the wild rose, sweet and fair—
And the tall broom, proudly waving
In the balmy mountain air.

Serpentining ridges wriggle
Round cairns of the olden day—
And, amid the clustering brackens,
Towers the high stone, huge and grey.

Here the fairies lov'd to gambol
In the moonbeam's silver light ;
To this theatre of their frolics
Uncontested was their right.

For 'twas said, that he who ventured
This same field with plough to tear,
Haunted by these luckless gentry,
Ne'er would thrive in health or gear.

But a strangely reckless peasant
Laugh'd at all his neighbours told ;
He would plough the fairy's meadow,
Were their charter e'er so old.

'Twas a mild and calm spring evening,
O'er the hills the sun crept low,
Sad and leisurely, as seeming
Loth from scene so sweet to go.

And now the stubborn, sceptic farmer,
Slack'd from almost ceaseless toil,
Resolv'd that the next morn his ploughshare
Should be dipp'd in fairy soil.

Slow the curfew hour was noted
By the distant castle bell—
And a deep and snoring slumber
Quickly o'er his senses fell.

But, though clos'd the outward vision,
Restless Fancy's pencil drew,
Bright before his mental organs,
The fairy meadow's varied view.

From a cairn's ample summit
Stream'd a bonfire's ruddy rays ;
Implements of agriculture
Fed its high and flickering blaze.

Round it danced a thousand figures,
All in emerald garb bedight—
And the long grass did scarcely bend
To their footing, feat and light.

And they sung a dreadful ditty—
What it was he could not say ;
But trembling woke the sceptic farmer,
Long and fervently to pray.

But when morn sweetly glimmer'd,
“ Pooh !” he said, “ 'tis all a dream ;
Shall a soothless vision fright me ?
Ploughboy, yoke the strongest team.”

“ Faith I dread, my worthy master,
’Tis the fairy’s field you mean ;
But the pilniewinks I’ll suffer,
Ere with plough I there am seen.”

Vain and useless was remonstrance,
To such service bend would none ;
And in burning wrath the farmer
Hillwards drove his steers alone.

Soon he reach'd the dreaded meadow—
Boldly sunk his ploughshare deep ;
“ Pooh !” said he, “ a lying legend,
Soothless as the whims of sleep.”

Instant as the words were uttered,
Wonderous music flow'd around ;
’Twas like the sigh of evening zephyr,
Blent with distant streamlet’s sound.

All astounded stood the farmer,
Motionless and sore agast ;
All his members, terror-smitten,
Quaked like willow in the blast.

Suddenly there stood beside him
One of an uncommon mein ;
A gentle of such dapper bearing
Had the peasant never seen.

Small his limbs, and slim his middle,
Closely girt in leaf-hued stole ;
Very like a modern dandy
Was the being, on the whole.

Shrill the tiny being shouted,
And the steers, in sudden fear,
Fled as if ten thousand gad-flies
Had assailed them in the rear.

Forth from cairn, brake, and dingle,
Darted many a little man ;
Soon was all the meadow swarming
With the angry elfish clan.

And they seized the quaking peasant—
With him, I trow, it fared not well—
For he reach'd his home at night-fall,
Creeping like a sun-struck snail. *

* Some may, perhaps, imagine that the idea of the foregoing ballad is taken from a story in the " Popular Tales and Romances of the Northern Nations;" they are, indeed, somewhat similar, but the legend here given is current in Kincardineshire, where the Fairy's Field is still shown.

THE RECLUSE.

Sad hermit of the mountain wild,
Unpity'd, unbelov'd of men,
From social pleasures self-exil'd,
Why sigh you here in lonely glen ?

Lo ! age hath bent thy faded form,
Thy brow is sere, thy hair is grey—
While no one shields thee from the storm
Of wintry life's declining day.

“ I grieve not,” said the hoary sage,
“ But calmly wait fate's latest blow ;
Though in the train of trembling age
Lurk many a grief, and many a woe.

“ In sooth, I wish not to recall
The smiling morn of life again ;
Youth's sweetest draughts are mix'd with gall,
Its gayest hours o'erhung by pain.

“ My Ada was the fairest flower
That e'er adorned a Highland vale ;
And aft we spent the lover's hour
In yonder lovely woodland dell.

“ But proud and wealthy were her kin,
And I a youth unknown and poor ;
Their smiles I might not hope to win
While in life's path I trode obscure.

“ ‘ Your parents treat me scornfully,
For little worldly store have I ;
But, Ada, thou art all to me,
And for your sake I'd gladly die.

“ ‘ Fortune I'll court on foreign shore—
Haply success may bless my way ;
And we may meet to part no more,
If Ada's heart learn not to stray.’

“ And Ada swore, with tearful eye,
By all her hopes of peace and heaven,
That, save to me, her only joy,
To none her hand should e'er be giv'n.

“ I kiss'd my love, and on the main
Embark'd, in quest of luring gold ;
By pirates was our vessel ta'en,
And we to horrid slavery sold.

“ A long, a sad, and torturing year,
I pined in misery's darkest cave ;
Even friendly hope scarce deigns to cheer
The bosom of an eastern slave.

“ The sun in darkness quench’d his blaze—
I slept within my fettering ring,
And to the scenes of happier days
Was wafted back on fancy’s wing.

“ Shouts broke my blissful dream—anon
I heard the captives’ mustering call,
To quench the fire that prey’d upon
The youthful Emperor’s splendid hall.

“ A female at a window high
The gazers’ helpless pity drew ;
Thrill’d to my heart her doleful cry,
And on I rush’d to her rescue.

“ ‘ It is my favourite Sultanness !’
Loud cried the prince, with voice of fear ;
‘ Whoe’er relieves her from distress
An Emir’s costly robe shall wear.’

“ I thought not of the gurdeon high,
But grasp’d a cord of ample fold,
And up the crackling stairs did fly,
While flame and smoke around me roll’d.

“ My charge to earth I safely lowered,
’Mid shouts of rapture loud and long ;
And, trusting to the faithful cord,
Sunk down amid the applauding throng.

- “ With sudden honours I was crown’d—
The children of the eastern sky
To fierce resentments set no bound,
No bound to generosity.
- “ But though on me was bent the smile
Of Asia’s daughters, heavenly fair,
My heart resisted every wile,
For Ada’s image still was there.
- “ ‘ Youth,’ said the Emperor, ‘ well know I
You pine your native land to see—
I may not bear to see thee sigh—
Go, and my blessing go with thee.’
- “ With wealth in store I left that land—
And O the mountain air seem’d sweet,
When first I press’d my native strand,
And hastened on my love to greet.
- “ And O my heart beat fast and loud,
When near my Ada’s home I drew ;
Dark thoughts did on my bosom crowd,
And respiration painful grew.
- “ In hall and bower the tapers burn’d,
And music’s voice rose sweet and high ;
I saw my Ada, but she turn’d
Away from me her lovely eye.

“ I saw a youth before her stand,
 (My heart seem'd bursting from its core).
I saw him take her ivory hand,
 I saw a ring, but saw no more.

“ The spell that brightened years of woe
 At once withdrew its wizard light—
My brain swam round—no more I know,
 For all around grew dark as night.”

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THE WITCH OF THE GRAMPIANS.

There liv'd an auld witch 'mang the Grampian
An' a witch o' might was she— [hills,
An' cou'd blast the cow or the cowte, I trow,
Wi' a glint o' her gruesome ee.

At mornin' grey, when the dew's waur rank,
An' at gloamin's misty fa',
Like a maukin, I ween, might that carlin be
Hirplin' o'er dyke an' wa'. [seen

She could sail the river in a nit-shell sae wee,
When kelpies scaich'd at e'en—
And she could fly through the drumlie sky
On the stem o' the rag-weed green.

'Mid scroggs an' rocks her cottage stood,
On a moor right bleak an' bare ;
An' on ilka last night o' the auld moon's light,
Mony witches an' deils met there.

There won'd a lass in a neighbouring glen,
An' a baldarach * wench was she—
For laird, nor loon, nor knight, nor clown,
Durstna venture her lips to prie.

* Fearless.

White was her brow, an' rosy her cheek,
An' neat an' jimpy her waist—
But her arms stout and long, and shoulders sae
A boxin' ring wad ha' graced. [strong,

For brownie or fairy, bogle or ghaist,
Unco little cared she ;
An' the witches' wark, an' secrets dark,
Fu' sair she grien'd to see.

She sought nae hank o' scarlet twine,
Her body frae skaith to keep ;
Nae branch pu'd she frae the hallowed tree,
That quakes when the breezes sleep.

But she placed in her bosom the sacred book,
An' light o'er the moor-lan' gade ;
She pass'd the black dale, an' the haunted vale,
Withouten fear or dread.

An' she reach'd the carlin's lanely hut,
An' peep'd through the window low,
An' she saw ten hags, in sooty rags,
Creep about in a hobblin row.

An' they stirr'd a fierce fire, and croon'd a strange
Wi' mony a yelp and wow— [sang,
Till ten little deils, at ithers heels,
Sprang out o' the bickerin' low.

The maiden's fears her prudence o'ercame,
An' she shriek'd out the holy name ;
Then wi' eldrich haloo, the fearfu' crew
Disappeared in smoke an' flame.

Forth frae her hallan cam' the witch,
Wi' vengefu' ire up-blawn ;
On the maiden's fair cheek her claws she did
Till the blude doun streamin' ran. [streak,

The lass, as I said, was a lass o' pith,
An' she levell'd the witch i' the mire—
An' she pommell'd her sore, nor ga'e she o'er
Till a tempest cam' on wi' ire.

The wind raise wild, an' the inky cloud
Drove heavily o'er the plain ;
An' the swell'n rill, frae aff the hill,
Cam' tumblin' doun amain.

The maid left the carlin wamblin' low,
An' o'er the bent did fly ;
While the rain down dash'd, and the lightning
An' the thunder bellowed high. [flash'd,

She reach'd the burn that at gloamin' she cross'd,
But it seem'd a river noo ;
An' doun its swirl, wi' splash and whirl,
The uprooted fir-tree flew.

The lassie sat down on the grassy bank—
Right drouket an' weary was she ;
An' she wis'd that to bed she had gane, instead
O' wanderin' sic ills to dree.

An' aye the rain frae her lang black hair
Wi' han' benumbed she wrang ;
An' aye her eye sought the mornin' sky,
But the sweet light tarried lang.

Sair shivered she i' the cauld night win',
And she sigh'd out mournfullie—
“ Twenty kisses and one I'd gie to the man
That o'er the burn wou'd bear me !”

“ 'Tis done ! 'tis done !” cried a laughin' voice—
She started wi' fear an' shame ;
'Twas the farmer braw, o' Lowrie's-shaw,
Frae Aikey Fair ridin' hame.

He lifted her on his stalwart steed,
An', tho' wildly the water ran,
Its waves they clear'd, and the younker requir'd
His kisses twenty an' one.

Sair wad the maiden hae blush'd, I trow,
But 'twas useless, ye ken, i' the dark—
Sae she paid him his due without ony ado,
An' skipp'd hameward, blithe as the lark.

HELEN GRAHAM.

Fair Helen Graham gaed down to the banks
O' the river Dee, to bleach her linen ;
An' there she met her Highlan' laird,
An', O, his words were sweet an' winnin'.

“ Fair Helen Graham ! I hae lo'ed ye lang,
Wi' a love that ne'er can know decayin' ;
Consent wi' me this night to gang,
An' dinna think o' langer delayin'.

“ I'll braid yer hair wi' the silken twine—
Wi' the silken twine sae rich and bonny ;
On your lovely breast the ruby shall shine—
Ye s'all be brawer far than ony.

“ Blithely, at noon-tide's sultry hour,
Through green Glentanner's groves we'll wan-
An' at balmy eve, in the birken bower, [der;
We'll list to the wimplin' stream's meander.”

“ But O ! what wou'd my parents say,
Gin their well lov'd Helen thus should leave
I'm a' the comfort that they hae, [them ?
An' a deed o' mine s'all never grieve them.”

Wi' a kiss an' a smile he answered soon—

“ Will it grieve them, my bonny Helen,
To bid them flitt frae the smoky town
To a well-stock'd farm, an' a better dwellin' ? ”

“ An' what will your noble comrades say,
Should ye marry a gardener's daughter ?
How will you bear their pridefu' smile ?
How will you brook their scornfu' laughter ? ”

“ Nought care I for nobles proud,
Nor for the honour around them beamin',
For I deem it still the noblest blude
That through a virtuous heart is streamin' . ”

The noblest dame, in silken stole,
Wi' fashion's aid sae trig an' comely,
Con'd never boast a gentler soul
Than Helen in her kirtle homely.

He clasped her han' sae soft an' wan,
An' round her threw his tartan plaidie ;
An' he's ta'en her to the mountain lan',
An' o' castle an' forest made her lady.

DOUGLAS OF ADENVALE.

She has deceived us both.

Dryden.

With broken lance the southeron foe
O'er the misty mountains bound—
The battle's roar has died away,
And hush'd is the trumpet's sound.

And from yon dark hill's spreading base
Where rose the conflict's yell,
The bleeding hero's dying sigh
Comes on the evening gale.

But where, O where, is the gallant youth
Who fought so long and well?
Where is the chief of the matchless sword
Douglas of Adenvale?

Douglas pursues the routed foe,
Reckless and swift as the wind—
His bravest and his fleetest men
Are panting far, far behind.

There was four-an'-twenty Saxon carls,
Well tried in mony a field ;
The foremost they in bloody fray,
The last to fly or yield.

Sullen an' slow, like wounded wolves,
They strode along the law ;
Nor with their comrades mingled they,
For they deem'd them dastards a'.

Sair ferly'd the carls when all alone
They saw the Douglas near ;
“ Beshrew me knight but thy thoughtless chace
May haply cost thee dear !”

Swift and stark was Douglas' steed,
Nor reck'd he of command—
And in a trice he threw his white foam
Amid the surly band.

Four o' the stalwart carls full soon
Lay gasping on the ground ;
But Douglas from his saddle was torn,
And sickerlie was he bound.

An' when they reached Carlisle towers,
The chief o' Adenvale,
Was doom'd within a dungeon strong
In endless night to dwell.

* * * * *
Dark was the night, and the tempest beat
On Carlisle's castle wa' ;
The fire-flaught glinted through the gloom,
An' hoarsely the win's did blaw.

From troubled slumber Douglas woke,
An' he saw, wi' wonderin' eye,
A tall an' beauteous female form,
Mute gazing, stand him nigh.

Her white hand held a silver lamp—
Her robe was costly an' rare ;
An' her shining locks, in gowden snood,
Was bound with nicest care.

Her eye was like the mountain gem *
In the bright moon's peaceful ray ;
An' a cherub smile from her lovely face
Was fadin' like light away.

“ Art thou,” the wonderin' Douglas said,
“ Some sprite from heaven high,
In all thy brightness come to soothe
A captive's misery ?”

* The jewels found on the Scottish mountains are said to shine brightest in the light of the moon.

Her smile return'd—" My mother dear
On Scotia's hills was bred—
And she told me tales of those who wore
The bonnet and the plaid.

" I saw thee hither brought in bonds,
And deeply I long'd again
Thy face to see ; but female pride
That wish did long restrain.

" My sire to London court is gone,
With half his merry men ;
And of those towers the keys I bear
'Till he return again."

To smile upon her captive love
Oft came that lady fair ;
And he would not have changed his prison dark
For room in palace rare.

But the day, unwish'd for, came at last
When Douglas was set free ;
And ne'er did prisoner quit his cell
With less good-will than he.

He reach'd his father's lofty towers,
An' his friends' welcome was kind ;
But he couldna smile, for he had left
His young heart far behind.

On ilka tree the little birds
Their songs pour'd cheerfullie ;
“ Sing on, sing on, ye merry tribe,
But yer notes nae pleasure gie :

“ For I lang to hear the bonny bird
That sang sae sweetly to me
In dungeon, where heaven's bless'd light
Ne'er cam' to glad my ee.

“ But don yer arms, my men so brave,
An' follow me o'er the Tweed ;
For I go to demand my fair love's hand—
May heaven our erran' speed.”

In gallant trim the warriors stood
Carlisle's strong gates before ;
“ Now, come ye here in peace or war ?”
Demanded the governor.

The Douglas chieftain bowed fu' low—
“ We come in peace,” said he,
“ An' to beg that your daughter, sae sweet and
My honoured bride may be.” [fair,

“ Sir knight,” replied the governor,
“ You love no child of mine ;
I've been a husband but eighteen months,
And my years are forty and nine.”

In mute surprise the Douglas stood—
And Carlisle's grey-hair'd lord
Clasp'd with one hand his darkening brow,
While the other grasp'd his sword.

And then he started suddenly,
As if stung by bitterest pain ;
“ Be pleas'd to tarry here, Sir Knight,
Until I come again.”

Again he came, and by the hand
He led a female fair ;
An', O, how flush'd that lady's cheek
When she saw the Douglas there.

But ere she wist, her lover's arms
Twined round her rapturously ;
While Carlisle's chieftain gnash'd his teeth
In frightful agony.

“ Forbear !” he cried ; “ she is my wife,
Whom I lov'd right tenderly !
And, till this hour, I ne'er had cause
To doubt her loyalty.

“ I may no longer gaze in joy
Upon those graces rare ;
And 'twere shame to suffer a heart so frail
To beat in a breast so fair.”

He said, and in her bosom so white
His sword plunged violently ;
And at his feet his lady fell,
And died without a sigh.

The Douglas uttered a cry of woe,
While his heart throb'd painfullie ;
“ Thy doom, old man, is cruelly just—
But she ne'er could have loved thee !

“ And here I swear, no woman e'er
Shall in my bosom lie——”
He burst away, for sorrow's dew
Was gathering in his eye.

ANNABELL.

I.

Who is she that sits lone by the rill
That winds through the glen, deep and drear ?
Her brown hair hangs loose and dishevell'd, and still
From her pale cheek she wipes the big tear :
Sorrow is shrined in her downcast eye,
And oft from her bosom bursts the big sigh—
She heeds not the blast that howls angry and high,
Through the forest dismantled and bare.

II.

O that eye once was bright as the dew drop of morn,
And the light of her kind father's hall ;
That cheek once was fair as the rose on the thorn,
And that drooping form graceful and tall :
But now sad and lone in the desert wild,
From her home and the friends of her childhood exil'd,
Like a down-trodden flower she lies withering and
And envy exults in her fall. [soil'd,

III.

For she listened to Edward, whose treacherous wile,
And arts so delusive and gay,
The soft heart of innocence well could beguile,
And lead the unwary astray :

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